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THE EDWARDS-SMYTH HOUSE

CHARLESTON, SOUTH CAROLINA

by ALBERT SIMONS, A·I·A·

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AN

Architectural Monograph

The EDWARDS - SMYTH *House*
Charleston, *South Carolina*
By Albert Simons A.I.A.

Being the SIXTH *Number of Volume XIV and*
THE EIGHTY-SECOND MONOGRAPH OF

THE WHITE PINE SERIES

Intimate treatiſes of the ARCHITECTURE of the *American Colonies* and of the *Early Republic* preſented with well ordered completeneſs, to further a broader underſtanding and to create a permanent Record of *Early American* ARCHITECTURE.

RUSSELL F. WHITEHEAD, Editor

CONTAINING ALSO

Meaſured Drawings from the GEORGE F. LINDSAY *Collection of* EARLY AMERICAN *Documents · The* WHOLE *impoſingly embelliſhed by Reproductions of Beautiful Photographs by* KENNETH CLARK

NEW YORK

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Detail of Entrance—14 Legaré Street

THE EDWARDS-SMYTH HOUSE, CHARLESTON, SOUTH CAROLINA

THE EDWARDS-SMYTH HOUSE CHARLESTON, SOUTH CAROLINA

by ALBERT SIMONS, A. I. A.

IN A CITY of interesting buildings the Edwards-Smyth house is one of the most distinguished. While in every way the outgrowth of local, climatic and social requirements, it has moreover, that flavor of cosmopolitan sophistication that is ever an attribute of good breeding. While essentially a Charleston House, it could take its place without embarrassment in Blackheath, London, or in Lansdowne Place, Bath, where its later Georgian kinship would at once receive recognition. Designed for a sub-tropical climate where heat lingers and winter is only a pleasant interlude, it rises from a high arcaded basement above the spacious gardens and towers up three lofty stories to a roomy garret. No breeze can blow in from the harbor without entering one of its many tall windows, while the long piazzas shade the chambers from the ardors of the too intense sun of summer noons.

The servants' quarters are detached at a convenient distance from the house and bespeak a social order that provided gracious, if not always efficient, domestic service.

Thus far it is local and follows well established precedent. It is the thoroughly studied assurance displayed in combining all of the elements, the piazzas, the gates, the fence, the dependencies and the garden into a unified scheme that mark it as the work of more than the amateur. Many other houses in Charleston have employed all of these elements but none have combined them more happily. Let us consider the fence and gateway. If the house were not of such towering proportions it would be overbalanced by such monumental gates and posts, but the unity is sustained by using the same brickwork as in the house and preserving the same rather small scale throughout all of the detail. The gates combine the use of wood and wrought iron in a rather unusual but successful manner. The doorway, though simple, gains emphasis by being framed by two quadrants of wrought iron grilles and is approached by a short flight of marble steps curving outward in the most welcoming gesture. Within the door the steps continue up to the first story piazza.

The long many storied piazza is one of the most characteristic features of the houses of Charleston and gives the town much of its individuality. Seldom however, do they tie in with the architectural composition and in most cases are frankly a compromise between correct design and convenience. In this case the matter has been handled with the greatest tact. A screen of brick work has been carried across the street end which ties it to the house and serves as a setting for the doorway. This screen is finished by the cornice of the first story piazza. Looking through the fence we see repeated in two tiers the prolonged rhythm of eight widely spaced and very slender columns bearing very flat segmental arches. This type of arcade occurs frequently in Charleston and on one nearby plantation, but as far as the writer's observation goes, does not appear in quite this form in other American towns of this period, nor does there seem to be any English or continental precedent for its use. It is, however, obviously Adam in its inspiration and recalls those segmental vaults and arches that occur at Sion House and other Adam buildings which were in turn derived from vaults found at Pompeii, and in those charming stuccoed grottoes in the via Latina near Rome. These arch forms are not structural of course, but are only simulated in wood. However, the grace of line achieved, justifies this piece of architectural fiction. The capitals of the columns are typically Adam with a single row of slender laurel leaves about the neck. The banister rail is kept as simple and delicate in scale as possible in order that it may not interrupt the clean lines of the columns.

The brickwork of the house, while restrained, is worthy of note. The corners of the front are accented by long and short quoins of projecting brickwork and the stories are marked off in like manner by flat belt courses. In the flat arches over the windows, the bricks are ground so as to come to a straight line at the bottom and top and the mortar joint is kept to a uniform width. One other refinement has been introduced. As the Carolina

"grey brick" is hand made and quite uneven along its edges, the joints have been filled with mortar of the color of the brick and then a narrow tooled joint has been worked in of white mortar. This narrow white line contrasts agreeably with the dull rust color of the brick.

Entering the stair hall from the middle of the piazza, we find that the plan of the building is quite simple, consisting of two large rooms on each floor separated by the hall. There is an addendum of smaller rooms at the back but this is obviously of later construction than the house and is of no special interest.

The stairway begins its flight on the left side of the hall and continues upward to the garret without a break in the continuity of the mahogany handrail. This rail is carried on delicate wooden spokes of rectangular section and stiffened at intervals by iron rods of the same appearance as the wooden spokes so that no newel posts are required. The hall ceiling has an ornamental plaster treatment consisting of a centerpiece of garlands of husks and radiating laurel leaves, and a flat band on the soffit of the stairs against the wall of a vine motif which is continued up through the second story hall. The rooms overlooking the street on both the first and second floors are given the more elaborate treatment, yet the back rooms are sufficiently ornate to make it quite evident that all four rooms were intended for the reception and entertainment of guests, the four rooms on the third and fourth stories being reserved for bedchambers. As the four main rooms are rather similar let us consider only the rear dining room on the first story and front drawing room on the second floor. In the dining room the rather chaste mantle of flat pilasters and garlanded frieze is set between two doors opening into closets formed by the chimney breasts. On the garden side between a door and a window we find an arched and panelled recess, the proper setting in which to enshrine the sideboard. Opposite the fireplace are two tall recessed windows overlooking the piazza. The architrave of all the windows comes just below the bottom plaster frieze and is enriched only with a band of simple reeding. The same architrave is carried around the door leading into the hall. All of the windows throughout the house have inside shutters that fold back into the jambs of the windows and show as panels on the face. There is a panelled wainscot about three feet high extending around the room. The band in the wainscot cap is enriched with swags indicated by short incised lines placed close together. Above the wainscot the plaster walls continue unbroken. There is a very flat plaster cornice at the ceiling with a plaster frieze below made interesting by an alternating rhythm of a group of channels and rosettes. (*See illustration on page* 286.) The general character of this room, though refined, is masculine and restrained, it is the sanctum pre-eminently suited for the critical appreciation of Burgundy and Madeira. Here, nothing suggesting the frivolous has been tolerated.

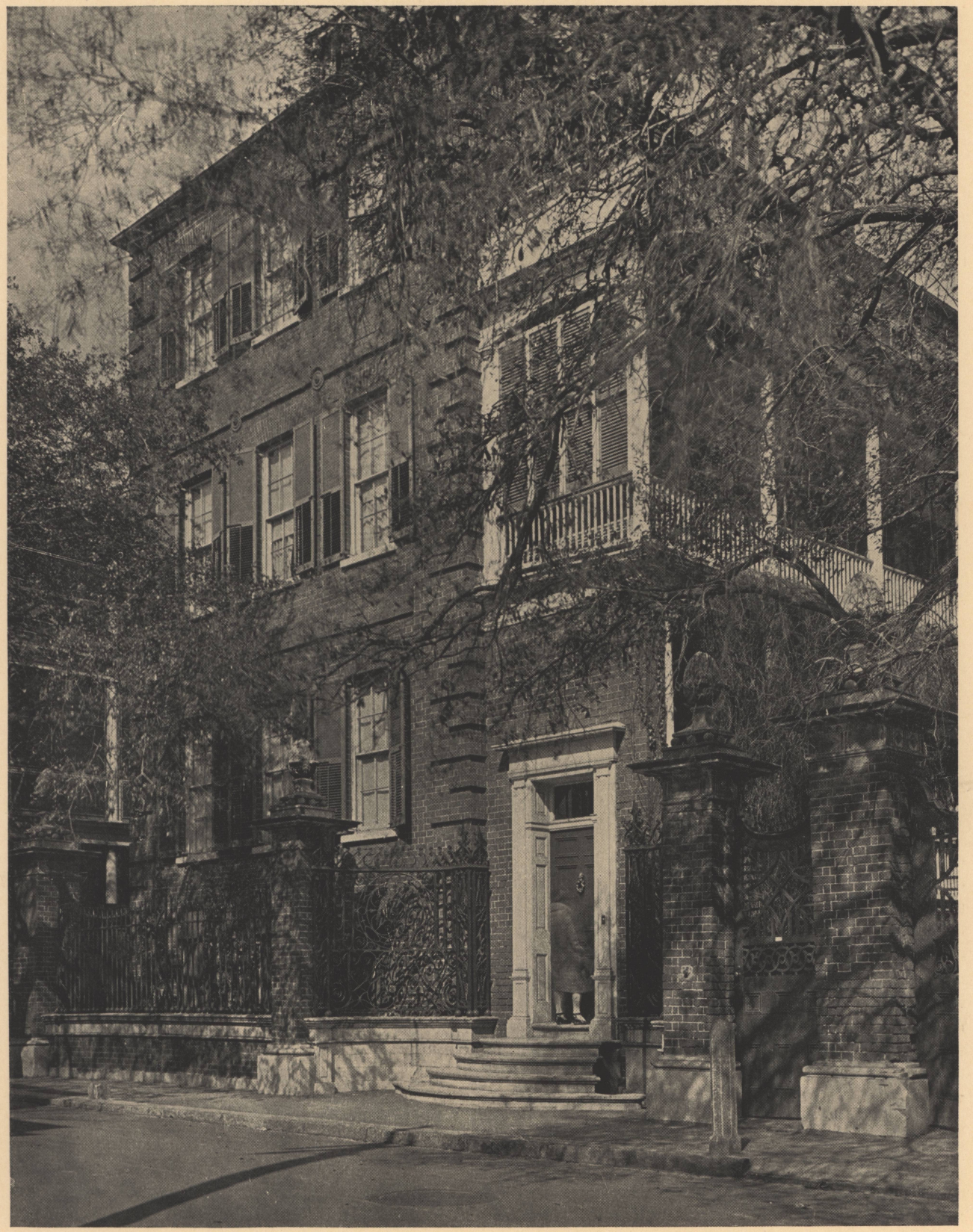
In the second floor drawing room a much more ornate treatment has been carried out. The mantle has engaged columns of bold projection and the frieze has garlands and baskets of fruits and flowers, scrolls and attenuated rinceau while the mantel shelf curves outward in the centre and inward at the ends. The hall door has not only an enriched architrave but a frieze and a cornice as well and is balanced symmetrically by a false door which if opened would plunge us down the stair well. The wainscot is similar to that in the dining room but it is in the plaster work that the greatest enrichment has been lavished. The centerpiece covers a considerable area of the ceiling and consists of six garlands of husks surrounding a circular band of alternating anthemion and palmettes about a huge rosette of wind blown acanthus leaves. The plaster cornice has a frieze bearing another variant of the anthemion motif while on the ceiling near the cornice are bands of countersunk reeding interrupted at regular intervals by enriched squares. The general effect of this room is much more gay and sumptuous than the dining room.

The bedrooms on the third floor have garlanded mantels, panelled wainscot, simple trim for doors and windows and very plain plaster cornices. The garret rooms are without fireplaces but are plastered and neatly trimmed, even on this story the windows have carefully fitted folding shutters in the window jambs. The workmanship throughout the house is uniform in general period and character.

Behind the house stands the kitchen with servants' quarters above and further to the rear is the stable and coach house with dormer rooms under the roof for the stable boys. These service buildings are separated from the garden by a screen of slender Tuscan columns with parapet walls between bearing panels of light wooden railings. Within the garden is a tiny octagonal tea house with a pagoda-like roof. Rising in the midst of oleanders, spice bays, pomegranates and spikenards, it strikes an exotic note in harmony with the sub-tropical setting.

Documentary evidence as to the dates at which the property has changed title is available but in the lack of more specific information these dates are inconclusive in determining when the house now standing was built.

The property consists of two lots. The original grant was made to Richard Philips in 1694 and was later conveyed to Ralph Izard. In 1767 Ralph Izard conveyed to Barnwell Elliott. In 1784 the Master in Chancery conveys to Benj. Waller "all that certain brick residence



Number 14 *Legaré Street*

THE EDWARDS-SMYTH HOUSE, CHARLESTON, SOUTH CAROLINA

and lot lately belonging to Ralph Izard." In 1816 George Edwards bought a brick house and lot 52′ x 270′ for $20,000, and in 1818 the southern lot including a wooden house for $4,000.

The character of the house is most obviously post-revolutionary as comparison with authentically dated Charleston houses will show. Owing to the very adverse economic conditions that prevailed in Charleston for several years after the close of the Revolution, it is most unlikely that a building of this magnificence should have been erected between the evacuation of the town by the British in 1782, and 1784 when it passed to Benj. Waller. It is most improbable therefore, that the brick building on the property that came to Waller is the present dwelling. Now Waller owned the property for some thirty-two years from 1784 to 1816 and the writer is of the opinion that it was during this period in the revival of prosperity that this fine house was built. However, it is to George Edwards that we owe the iron fence, gates and pillars as is evidenced by his initials G. E. in the grilles flanking the doorway and by the additional fact that he bought the southern lot making the complete fence possible. The fifty-two feet of the original lot ended at the south in the middle of the coach gate. In the house there is no evidence of remodelling or patching together of work of different periods, so that the building of the house was carefully planned *de nouveau* and completed at one time while the same mode dominated. Even the gates, while later than the house, are much of the same period and suggest that they were built not many years later. While the above cannot be substantiated by documentary evidence it will doubtless satisfy most architects as plausible and the lack of specific dates will not deter their enjoyment of this very delightful building.

Mantel in Drawing Room, Second Floor

THE EDWARDS–SMYTH HOUSE, CHARLESTON, SOUTH CAROLINA

The Doorway into the Second Floor Hall

DRAWING ROOM, THE EDWARDS-SMYTH HOUSE, CHARLESTON, SOUTH CAROLINA

DRAWING ROOM CORNICE, SECOND FLOOR—THE EDWARDS-SMYTH HOUSE, CHARLESTON, SOUTH CAROLINA

DINING ROOM MANTEL—THE EDWARDS-SMYTH HOUSE, CHARLESTON, SOUTH CAROLINA

Drawing Room, First Floor

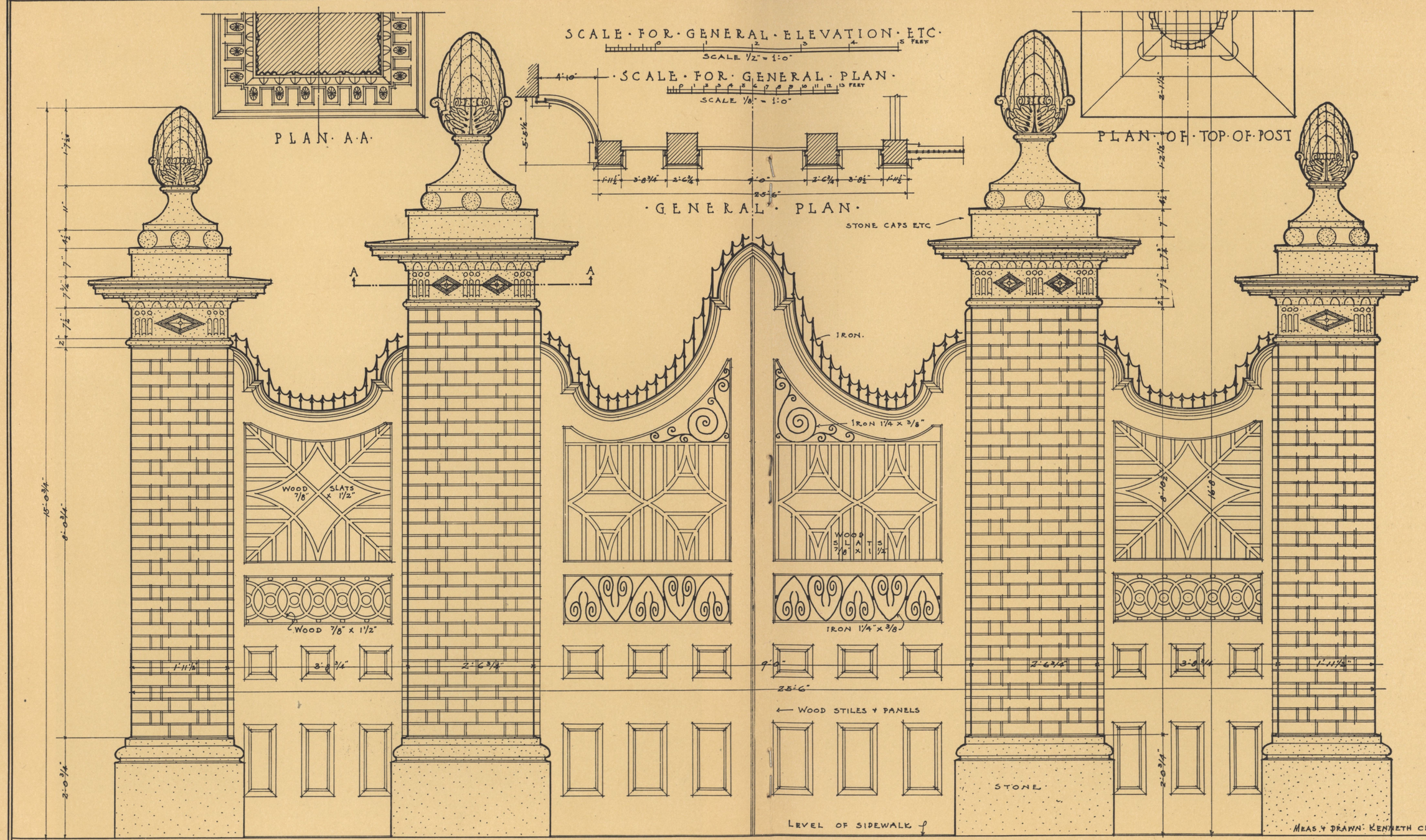
THE EDWARDS-SMYTH HOUSE, CHARLESTON, SOUTH CAROLINA

The MONOGRAPH SERIES *of*
EARLY AMERICAN DOCUMENTS

With MEASURED DRAWINGS *from*
The George F. Lindsay Collection

ENTRANCE GATEWAY AND FENCE
THE EDWARDS-SMYTH HOUSE
14 LEGARÉ STREET
CHARLESTON, SOUTH CAROLINA

GARDEN SIDE—LOOKING TOWARD THE STREET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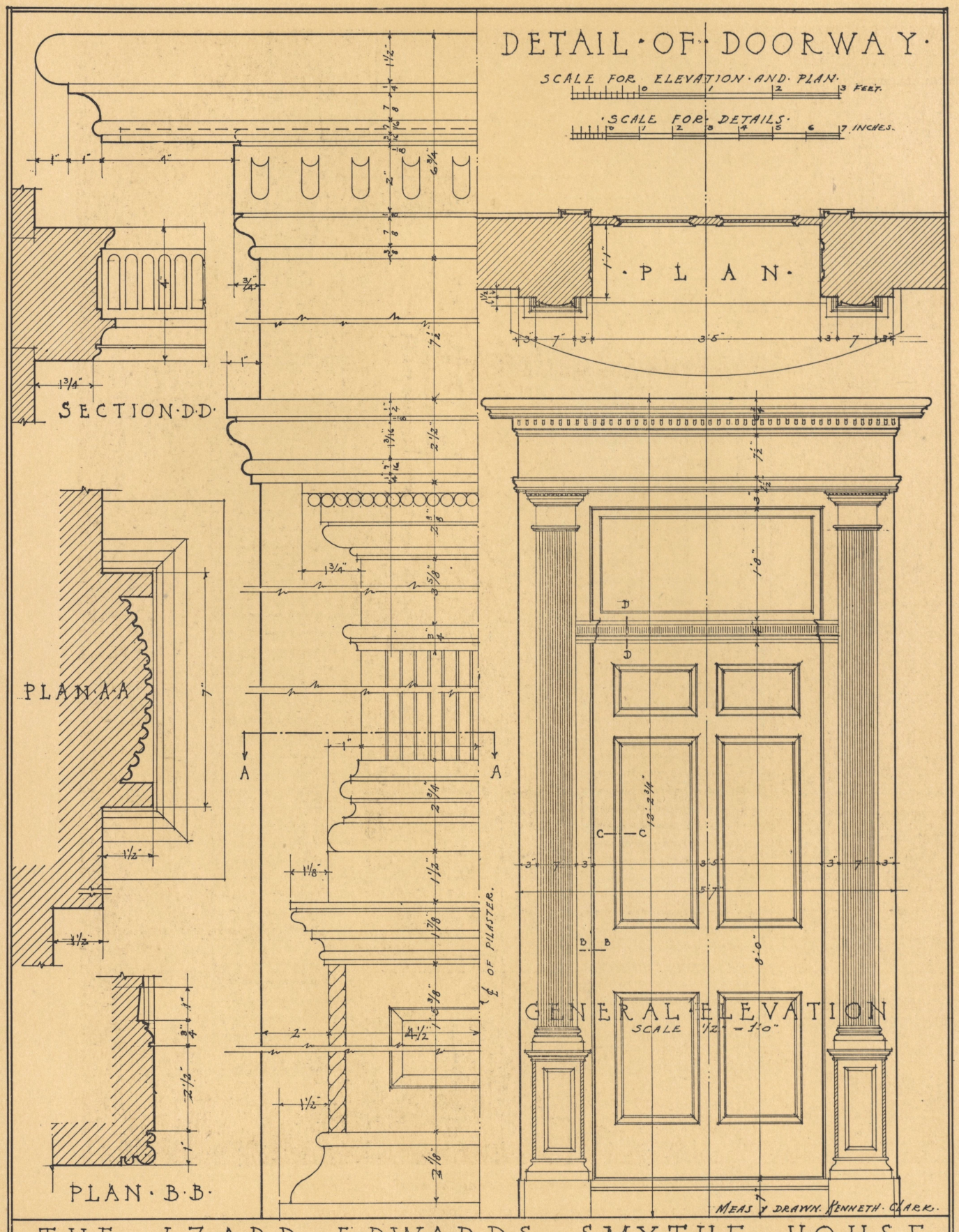
· GENERAL · PLAN ·
STONE CAPS ETC
IRON.
IRON 1¼ x ⅜"
WOOD SLATS 7/8" x 1½"
WOOD 7/8" x 1½"
IRON 1¼" x ⅜"
WOOD STILES & PANELS
STONE
LEVEL OF SIDEWALK
MEAS & DRAWN: KENNETH CLARK 1928.

ONE · HALF · INCH · SCALE · GENERAL · ELEVATION

GATES · OF · THE · IZARD · EDWARDS · SMYTHE · HOUSE

CHARLESTON · SOUTH · CAROLINA

Drawings are reproduced exactly at the scale marked


DETAIL · OF · DOORWAY ·
SCALE FOR ELEVATION · AND · PLAN.
3 FEET.
· SCALE FOR DETAILS ·
7 INCHES.
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GENERAL ELEVATION
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MEAS'D & DRAWN. KENNETH CLARK.

· THE · IZARD · EDWARDS · SMYTHE · HOUSE ·
· CHARLESTON · SOUTH · CAROLINA

Drawings are reproduced exactly at the scale marked

Wrought Iron Grille Quadrant framing the Entrance Doorway

THE EDWARDS-SMYTH HOUSE, CHARLESTON, SOUTH CAROLINA

Top of Gate Post

THE EDWARDS-SMYTH HOUSE, CHARLESTON, SOUTH CAROLINA

Gate Posts and Fence

THE EDWARDS-SMYTH HOUSE, CHARLESTON, SOUTH CAROLINA

SERVANTS' QUARTERS—THE EDWARDS-SMYTH HOUSE, CHARLESTON, SOUTH CAROLINA

STABLE AND COACH HOUSE—THE EDWARDS-SMYTH HOUSE, CHARLESTON, SOUTH CAROLINA

End of Coach House and Fence

THE EDWARDS-SMYTH HOUSE, CHARLESTON, SOUTH CAROLINA

Wood Construction Details

Notes for the Specification Writer

In Connection with Drawing on Page 287

Nationally accepted standard trade association lumber terms should be used in an architect's specification, rather than the obsolete or local grade names. This will eliminate much of the confusion now existing between the architect, builder and lumber dealer and will also save the client the possibility of having to pay a "safety premium," necessitated by specifications which are not clearly understood by those who contract to supply the lumber. In the suggestions that follow, offered for the assistance of the specification writer in connection with the wood construction details, shown on the following page, the data is stated in terms which have become standard in the producing districts from which the different species are obtained.

Special attention is called to INSULATION: one of the most important of recent developments in the building field

LUMBER: In view of the dangers of green or only partially seasoned lumber getting into a building and to establish the authority for the grade names used in the following specifications, it is suggested that a general clause be included in all specifications where lumber is specified as follows:

> **Specifications-General:** "All lumber for any purpose mentioned in these specifications shall be at least air dry when delivered for use and shall be in accordance with the standard lumber association grading rules of the producing district from which the particular kind of lumber furnished shall come."

NOTE: To insure delivery of Genuine White Pine in all cases where this wood is specified, it is also suggested that a sentence be added, reading: "All Genuine White Pine called for in these specifications shall carry the WEYERHAEUSER FOREST PRODUCTS trade-mark and the species mark of the manufacturer."

FRAMING: The lumber required for framing or purely structural purposes need not, of course, be clear lumber so long as such technical defects as it contains do not impair its strength or serviceability for this use. In fact, it would be nothing short of gross extravagance to demand clear lumber for this use. Furthermore, there are several different woods from as many different lumber-producing regions of practically equal structural merit as far as all ordinary house building requirements are concerned. Which one of these woods to choose in any given locality is therefore a question as to which one can be purchased in that locality most economically, a matter determined largely by the distance from the source of production and the consequent freight haul to the market in question. For this reason the specification of Structural lumber should be more or less elastic as is suggested in the following notes:

STUDDING, PLATES, BEAMS, FLOOR-JOISTS, GIRDERS, SILLS, BRIDGING, ETC.

> **Specifications:** "All structural members, including studding, plates, rafters, joists, blocking, etc., shall be No. 1 Common grade Douglas Fir (or Pacific Coast Hemlock) or (Northern Pine) or (Fir and Larch) and shall be at least air dry when delivered on the job."

SHEATHING BOARDS: The structural requirements of this item being less rigid than for the structural items listed above, lower grades should be permitted for reasons of economy.

The common grades suggested in the following specification may be run to a Shiplap pattern or dressed and matched (D&M) as preferred.

The choice of species for these uses is even more inclusive than that suggested above for dimension lumber.

> **Specification:** "All sheathing lumber shall be No. 3 Common grade (or No. 4 Common grade) Northern Pine (or Pondosa Pine) or (No. 3 Common Fir and Larch) or (White Fir) or (No. 1 Common) or (No. 2 Common Douglas Fir) or (Pacific Coast Hemlock 6″ (or 8″ or 10″) D&M (or run to standard shiplap)."

SUB FLOORS. For sub floors the same specification may be used unless for reasons of economy it may be desired to permit the use of "random widths" and "mixed lengths" square-edged lumber.

INSULATION: As suggested at the top of this page no single item in the construction of the modern house is more essential to comfort, both winter and summer, than a proper job of wall and roof insulation. Nor is there a more important factor in making a house easy and economical to heat. The brand of insulation recommended, namely, Balsam-Wool, is a Weyerhaeuser product, made from chemically treated, fire-resistant, sanitary wood fibre made waterproof and windproof between two sheets of tough, asphalt-lined kraft paper. It is a blanket form of insulation; flexible to permit a good, tight job and of greater practical insulating efficiency than any other similar product on the market today.

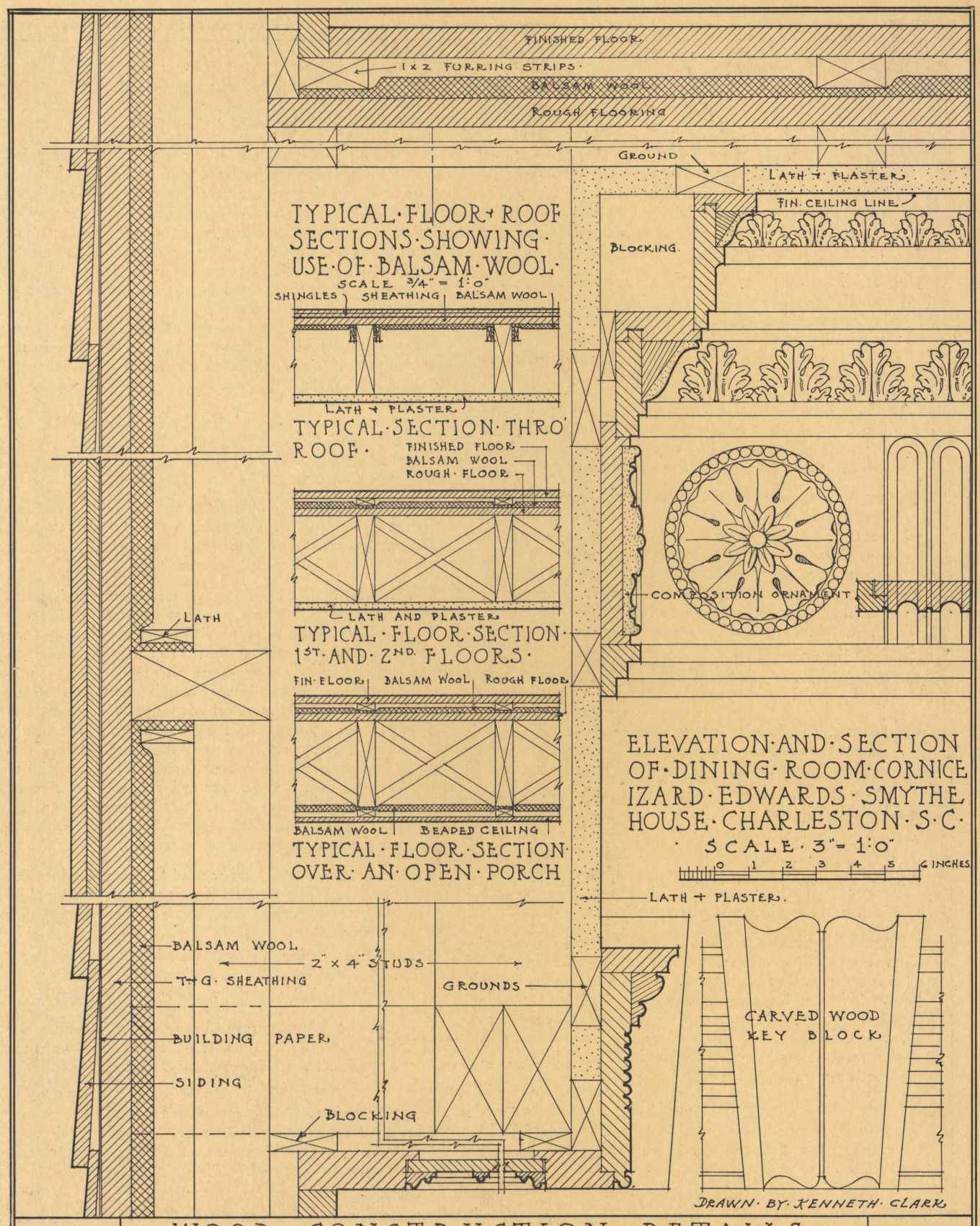
A good job of insulation requires that the insulation material be flexible and capable of tucking in to calk the cracks. This is particularly essential around window frames.

Suggested specifications for a complete job of insulation are on file in most architects' offices, or may be secured from any of the branch offices of the WOOD CONVERSION COMPANY (Weyerhaeuser Insulation Division) at 1955 University Avenue, Saint Paul; 1849 Straus Building, Chicago; and 101 Park Avenue, New York.

> **Specifications-General:** "Heat insulation shall be standard 1″-thick Balsam-Wool, manufactured by the WOOD CONVERSION COMPANY (Weyerhaeuser Insulation Division) Cloquet, Minnesota. Continuity of insulation shall be maintained. Where floors, ceilings or roofs are insulated, as well as outside walls, insulate thoroughly between joists and rafter ends. Throughout, all joints shall be made air-tight, especially at door and window openings. Use full-length strips of insulation. End joints, where necessary, shall be butted and covered with lath, nailed

[*Continued on page* 288]

·WOOD·CONSTRUCTION·DETAILS·
·SUGGESTED·BY·
WEYERHAEUSER·FOREST·PRODUCTS
·SAINT·PAUL·MINNESOTA·



WOOD CONSTRUCTION DETAILS

SUGGESTED BY

WEYERHAEUSER FOREST PRODUCTS

SAINT PAUL MINNESOTA

INSULATION (*Continued*)

through insulation to boarding or header. Insulation strips shall in all cases run in the same direction as studding, joists and rafters."

For Frame Outside Wall Insulation: Insulate with 17" width Balsam-Wool applied vertically between studding. The flanges or turnouts shall be continuously fastened by means of laths or strips nailed securely through insulation to the studding on the sides and to sills, plates or headers at the top and bottom.

For Roof Insulation: Insulate with 17" width Balsam-Wool 1" thick applied between the rafters with back of insulation against inside face of roof boarding. The flanges or turnouts shall be continuously fastened by means of laths or strips nailed securely through insulation to the sides of rafters, plates, ridges, etc.

For Floor Insulation: Insulate with 33" width Balsam-Wool applied over sub-floor with edges butted together over every other joint. Fur over insulation with 1" x 2" furring strips over each joint to receive finish floor.

Ceiling Insulation: (Joists 16" O.C.) Use instead of Roof Insulation for second floor ceilings where attic above is not to be used for living quarters; also for basement ceilings where space below is unheated; and for porch ceiling where space above is used for living quarters as in second floor extensions, etc. Insulation is also recommended for first floor ceilings under bedrooms that will be cold at night and for ceilings of first floor bedrooms where space above is heated at night.

Method No. 1 (17" width) Insulate with 17" width Balsam-Wool applied between joists with back of insulation against under side of rough flooring. The flanges or turnouts shall be continuously fastened by means of laths or strips nailed securely through insulation to the sides of joists, plates, headers, etc.

(Note: Where joists are 24" O.C. use 25" width Balsam-Wool.)

Method No. 2 (33" width) Insulate with 33" width Balsam-Wool applied on the bottom of joists, edges butted together on every other joist. Fur over insulation with 1" x 2" furring strips on each joist to receive lath and plaster or ceiling.

SIDING: For siding two woods suggest themselves. Bevel Siding is regularly made and stocked by most dealers in 4" and 6" widths (finished to 3½" and 5½") in both Genuine White Pine and Western Red Cedar. Wider siding 8", 10" and 12" wide (finished to 7½", 9½" and 11½" respectively) is called Bungalow or Colonial Siding but is of exactly the same pattern as the Bevel Siding and is available out of stock in either of the woods recommended.

The following specification is suggested:

Specification: "Siding shall be ½" x 6" standard Bevel Siding, 'B and Better' grade (or "C" grade) Genuine White Pine," *or*

"Siding shall be ½" x 6" Standard Bevel Siding, clear grade (or "A" grade) Western Red Cedar, or (¾" x 8" or 10" or 12" standard Bungalow Siding, No. 2 'Clear and Better' grade Western Red Cedar)."

EXTERIOR TRIM: The two most important requirements of an exterior finish wood, durability and ease of working under the carpenter's and wood carver's tools, are found to a higher degree in *Genuine* White Pine than in any other wood. There is no satisfactory substitute for *Genuine* White Pine in the better class of building construction. A naturally durable wood, White Pine has the important ability to "stay put" and to hold tight at the joints plus the further advantage of taking and holding paint.

Since other woods are not infrequently sold as White Pine, the Weyerhaeuser mills are now stamping each piece in the better grades of *Genuine* White Pine with the species mark "GENUINE WHITE PINE," in addition to the manufacturer's trademark.

Inasmuch as exterior trim is usually furnished by the millwork house, manufactured from "Shop" or "Factory" grades, no grade specification is recommended beyond that suggested in the following specification:

Specification: "All outside trim shall be cut from Genuine White Pine (*Pinus Strobus* or *Pinus Monticola*), free from sapwood and of such grade as to yield practically clear faces on all exposed surfaces."

INTERIOR TRIM, including interior casings, stools, wainscot, caps and bases, cornices, panels and stiles and all carved and applied ornament. Genuine White Pine or Pondosa Pine are suggested for all *inside* trim of the character detailed on the preceding page. Genuine White Pine lends itself to intricate carved ornament a little more readily, perhaps, than the general run of Pondosa Pine. Both of these woods are practical and will give service and, with the proper selection of stock at the millwork factory, either one will meet the requirements imposed by the details under consideration. The availability of these species of wood, the ease and care with which they can be worked, the ability to "stay put" after once in place, and the perfection with which they take and hold paint are qualities which recommend their specification.

Specification: "All lumber used for interior trim shall be Genuine White Pine (or Pondosa Pine) having clear faces wherever exposed and shall be of detail as shown on the drawings."

NOTE: Clear cuttings in both Genuine White Pine and Pondosa Pine are available in the so-called "Factory" or "Shop" grades carried in stock by millwork manufacturers.

SHINGLES: Western Red Cedar is so eminently fitted for a shingle wood that practically all shingles today are cut from this species. The proper grade and thickness of shingles and the use of double galvanized nails should be specified.

Specification: "Shingles shall be 5 to 2 (5 butts measuring 2 inches) Western Red Cedar, "A" grade and 100% vertical grain as per American Lumber Standard Specifications for 16" shingles."

WEYERHAEUSER FOREST PRODUCTS

Merchants National Bank Building, Saint Paul, Minnesota

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WYOMING

PRODUCTS MANUFACTURED

ROUGH and FINISHED LUMBER · POSTS, POLES and PILING
"BALSAM-WOOL"—The *flexible* insulation against heat, cold and sound
"NU-WOOD"—The *rigid* insulating wall board and plaster base
BOOK, NEWS-PRINT and WRAPPING PAPER

NAME AND LOCATION OF MANUFACTURING PLANTS

BOISE PAYETTE LUMBER CO., Boise, Idaho
CLEARWATER TIMBER CO., Lewiston, Idaho
CLOQUET LUMBER CO., Cloquet, Minn.
HUMBIRD LUMBER CO., Sandpoint, Idaho
JOHNSON-WENTWORTH CO., Cloquet, Minn.
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